

Intelligence for Obedience and Creativity for Subversion: Reading António Ladeira's *Os Monociclistas* (2018) and *Seis Drones* (2018)

Margarida RENDEIRO

CHAM, FCSH, Universidade NOVA de Lisboa

Email: mmrendeiro@netcabo.pt

ORCID: 0000-0002-8607-3256

Abstract

Social networking makes us communicate with the right persons; x-ray luggage scanners ensure secure travelling; computer applications save loads of books and are digital space savers. We could go on to conclude the obvious: intelligence has ensured critical technological breakthroughs to make present-day digital society fully operational and crystalline. However, we can also wonder the extent to which intelligence measures human development, that is the extent to which technology makes us better humans. Han (2015) argues that the digital world is a panoptic system that has made us alike so that we are better controlled. Before him, Foucault (1977) contended that vigilance systems, implemented since the 18th century, developed towards disciplinary forms of social control. A panoptic vigilance-based society has turned us into voluntary obedient humans. António Ladeira's *Os Monociclistas* (2018) and *Seis Drones* (2018) offer a glimpse of the dystopian existence of our urban society in the near future, fully dependent on panoptic systems of vigilance that ensure maximum efficiency and transparency. Han contends that human life is incompatible with absolute transparency regardless of what intelligence produces. Ladeira's anthologies confirm that intelligence has made us obedient, but we cannot be absolutely obedient all the time. Creativity is the disrupting factor that subverts the AI systems, and this factor alone restores our hope of becoming better humans in the future.

Keywords: Intelligence, Creativity, Obedience, Transparency, António Ladeira

1. On a Slightly Dystopic Note

In December 2018, *The New York Times* reported that the works that raised questions about the social and ethical implications of artificial intelligence (AI) and biotechnology had been pulled from the Guangzhou Triennial on the orders of cultural authorities in the southern Chinese province of Guangdong (Qin, 2018). Receiving no further explanation other than the works' 'incompatibility with Guangdong people's taste and cultural habits', the show's curators and affected artists were left thinking that those works were 'too timely, too relevant and therefore too discomforting for Chinese officials' (Qin, 2018). In China, social stability is a priority; thus, public debates with cogent questions about ethics are unwelcome. Nevertheless, this discomfort does not deter China from struggling to deliver cutting-edge technology, with ambitions to be in the frontline of the AI sector (Lucas, 2018). Uneasiness seems to grow having to expose that technological advancements invade the human body, control and manipulate it with a detrimental impact on the preservation of the concept of privacy associated to being human, thus, an unmanipulated sphere. The removal of works, such as Kaayk's *The Modular Body*, a living organism with human cells and artificial organs, and Blas and Wyman's *im here to learn so :))))*, the AI bot created by Microsoft in

2016 and shut down after users trained it to be a bigot, from the Guangzhou Triennial is illustrative of this tension.

As technology evolves, human dependence on computer applications and devices grows stronger and, what is more, technology seems to be one of the prime indicators of the level of human development. The first global forum on innovation and technology in sustainability, organised by the World Centre for Sustainable Development of the UN Development Programme, in Rio de Janeiro, in November 2018, shows that considerations on sustainable human development are largely indebted to its association to technology. *Black Panther's* (2018) *Wakanda* relies its high development on cutting-edge technology to the surprise of the rest of the world that deemed this African nation a developing society. Nevertheless, we cannot underestimate the impact that technology has on human development; as, Heidegger contended in the 1950s, "we are delivered over to it in the worst possible way when we regard it as something neutral" (Heidegger, 1977, p. 4). His words are opportune to this discussion because no one can be indifferent to the fact that day-to-day routines depend on AI.

The advancements in AI have been remarkable, to the point where there is hardly an aspect in contemporary life it does not cover. By the

achievements obtained so far, experts, researchers and engineers believe that the most significant accomplishments are yet to come (Roffel and Evans, 2018). However, in these neoliberal times, as AI makes the wealthy more powerful, we cannot underestimate the fact that neoliberal technology presents itself as power and a tool for the powerful. Hence, technology 'brings forth characteristic devotional objects that are employed in order to subjugate' (Han, 2017, p.12). In this respect, the cyber-mystery thriller *The Net* (1995) offered a glimpse of the extent to which the existence of personal identity, and consequently the interaction of the individual in community, was dependent on those holding the power of AI, at the same time the protagonist's daily routine was largely facilitated by computer technology. And the 3rd millennium had not yet begun.

In a world ruled by the AI systems, the information generated by the Big Data is essential to enhance effectiveness and control in the digital society. As Han argues, Big Brother and Big Business have formed an alliance and have divided human beings according to their usefulness and those "assigned to the 'waste' category belong to the lowest class (Han, 2017, p.65).¹

Subjugating and disciplining people's bodies and minds were, Foucault contended, the traits that characterised modern society since the 18th century. He tracked this project of disciplinary enforcement to the panopticon model designed by J. Bentham. Originally designed as a prison model, the panopticon raises the awareness of the inmate to the feeling of being permanently visible and watched by a single watchman positioned in such a way he could observe all cells. Combining the vigilance structure that 'automatizes and disindividualises power' (Foucault, 1995, p.202), with isolation and labour as part of the permanent disciplinary system, replicated in factories, schools, barracks and hospitals, Foucault argued that the capitalist society was built upon the docility of controlled bodies. Nevertheless, the 21st century shows that as capitalism mutated to neoliberalism, the *politics of the body* evolved towards *psychopolitics* (Han, 2017, p.24):

The body no longer represents a central force of production, as it formerly did in biopolitical,

disciplinary society. Now, productivity is not to be enhanced by *overcoming* physical resistance so much as by *optimizing* psychic or mental processes. Physical discipline has given way to mental optimization (Han, 2017, p.25).

On the one hand, transparency took hold of the public discourse based on the freedom of information. Freedom is delusional in the digital age when privacy is subordinated to the compelling need to show that there is nothing to hide (Han, 2015, p.69). There is no such thing as privacy as a sphere away from the public eye. Electrical shocks, sleep deprivation, drugs and solitary confinement are no longer disciplinary means. It is the digital panopticon, and docility is obtained by pleasing and fulfilling people, making them dependent and passive. Citizens do not engage in democracy. Neoliberalism turned citizens into onlookers and consumers. In other words, democracy became a *spectator democracy* (Han, 2017, p.10).

On the other hand, the new surveillance society is more elegantly and seductively totalitarian and oppressive than before. Social networks lure consumers into interacting and consuming. The smartphone is the *black mirror* and multifunctional tool of our auto-exploitation.²

To which extent has the AI affected the way we define humanity? And to which extent does the AI compromise the potential of our imagination and invention if its potential is not curbed? And to which extent are we not living in a cave, not too different from Plato's, only more seductive because black mirrors make them apparently more appealing? Applications of AI have been endless fodder for pop culture, ranging from *The Matrix* (1999) and *Her* (2013) to Le Guin's novels, just to mention a few of the North-American production. In Portugal, despite a resilient niche, sci-fi has remained almost invisible.³ António Ladeira's two latest short story anthologies, *Os Monociclistas e outras histórias do ano 2045* (2018) and *Seis Drones - Novas Histórias do ano 2045* (2018) - describe a dystopian existence of the urban surveillance society in the near future - in 2045 -, dependent on highly-advanced AI systems that ensure maximum efficiency and transparency at the same time they hamper individual freedom of movement and expression.⁴ The two volumes collect thirteen short

1 Big Data refers to data sets too complex for traditional data-processing application software to deal with. They offer great statistical power for marketing activities, cost-reducing and smarter decisions.

2 The TV sci-fi anthology series *Black Mirror* explores a high-tech world in an alternative present or near future, where the greatest tech innovations collide with the darkest instincts. Despite drawing directly from the black screens of computer monitors and smartphones, black mirror is a concept that dates back to the 18th century. At the time, the Claude Glass, also known as black mirror,

abstracted the subject reflected in the mirror from its surroundings, reducing and simplifying the colour and tonal range of scenes and scenery to give a painterly quality.

3 Saida de Emergência, Editorial Divergência and Imaginauta have been among the few resilient Portuguese publishers of sci-fi. Some of the recent titles include *Lisboa no Ano 2000* (Saida de Emergência, 2013), and *Por Mundos Divergentes* (Editorial Divergência, 2015).

4 António Ladeira, an Associate Professor of Portuguese at Texas Tech University, is the author of poetry, essays,

stories and each story focusses on a particular invention or system, ranging from digital books and unicycles to term life insurance, social networking, and travelling, among others. This paper establishes that Ladeira's short stories illustrate Han's argument: that despite the transparency panopticon, "human existence is *not transparent, even to itself*" and that "[t]he other's very lack of transparency is what keeps the relationship alive" (Han, 2015, p.3) and this factor alone may deter control from being absolute. In Ladeira's short stories, it is human imagination or creativity, the ineluctable trait of the human potential, that drives the narrative principle and shows that it disrupts the AI-controlled environment, and secure core humanness.

2. Intelligence for Obedience

Various gadgets and systems offer comfort and security at times when the human mind also has also to be trained to adapt to ever-increasing levels of speed, agility and quickness. Ladeira's anthologies convey the urgency to cope with these present-day needs. Digital pedagogical tools prepare all students to complete their basic, secondary and higher education at a rapid pace because time is a limited asset ("O professor"); phone lines use surveillance systems to prevent inaccurate information, rumors and gossips from spreading on phone calls ("Estás livre no sábado?"); a revolutionary unicycle sorts out social inhibitions caused by short stature and is the equalizer in the urban daily life, adapting life to unicycles, rolling at higher speed, excluding those who prefer to continue walking ("Os monociclistas"); a social network avoids love disappointments and time waste by suggesting ideal matches and friendships ("Galeria"); eyeglasses show images of the future ("O complexo"); term life insurances that deter insureds from wasting money and design life insurance plans according to precise calculations of life expectancy ("O contrato"); drones protect their users from massive advertising, stalkers and missiles ("Seis drones"); digital books include reader-tailored advertising and adapt classical literature to the new times and values ("O objecto"); and cars are self-driven and follow routes pre-defined and notified to a central authority in advance. Drivers' needs and routines are pre-defined and, thus, traffic jams and car accidents decrease in number ("A Rede"). Community life is closely monitored through a complex CCTV

network ("O inspector"), and another complex agency secures flying from menaces that range from terrorism to tumours that may eventually compromise the passengers' security and tranquillity during the flight. Intensive training courses make citizens qualified to travel, and their need or wish to travel requires sanctioning by the central authority ("Agência").

People hardly have to reason and strive because everything is organised to live individually and socially in such a way that favours the common good orderly and quietly. Pitfalls and the unexpected happen when people do not comply with the official rules and procedures and make one-off and spontaneous individual decisions; when they decide autonomously, do not use digital resources and use past resources. Reading books in print and writing with pencils are time-consuming activities and, therefore, time-wasters ("O professor"); summarizing films hastily may be the cause of bad publicity ("Estás livre no sábado?"); drone-malfunctioning leaves users to the mercy of buzz marketing and disturb their daily routines painfully ("Seis drones"). Living is complying with dispositions and obeying to rules. All the time. In other words, individuals lead automated lives in order to avoid personal mishaps and social disruptions; individual lives can even be terminated should they outlive the life expectancy limit agreed to lead a quiet life and not impose unnecessary financial liabilities to heirs ("O contrato"). Any decision deriving from predefined schemes is socially disruptive and chaos-damaging. The AI is, therefore, essentially life-supporting and monitoring is a need that makes the loss of individual privacy a collateral damage because it ensures common good and tranquillity.

The narrative space conveys the automated and deindividualized human existence. Geographically, all short stories take place in the "Territory" (*Território*), and the few names of specific areas are geo-localising only: harbour (*Marina*) and cliff (*Falésia*). On the one hand, this generalisation prevents readers from identifying these stories as narratives about a given society; on the other hand, the generalisation participates in the argument that the issues these anthologies deal with belong to the global world and result from the prevalence of the AI in present-day urban society.⁵ Action is carried out in places similar to those Foucault identified as traditionally disciplinary: at a school ("O professor"), at (high-tech) plants ("Os

fiction and a songwriter. His books are published by Bertrand Livres and On y va, in Portugal. Selected short stories of *Os Monociclistas* and *Seis Drones* were published in one volume in Brazil with the title *Estás livre no Sábado?* (Realejo Editores).

5 It is worthy of mention the fact that science fiction conveys the major conflicts between science, technology,

human nature and society, speculating about the (near) future based upon the major conflicts of the present. Major works published between the 1950s and 1970s conveyed the key importance of the Cold War, affecting areas, such as social organization and space exploration. Noteworthy examples include Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, Le Guin's *The Dispossessed* and Lem's *Solarys*.

monociclistas” and “O Complexo”) and at a hospital (“Falésia”). The disciplinary trait is preserved to implement obedience, as shown, for example, in “Os monociclistas”, when the reluctance to accept unicycle life is punished and is set an example:

Resolvi expiar de uma vez a culpa que sentia: em vez de disciplinar o meu irmão, criei um cargo só para ele. Um lugar de importância vital: representante da Monociclo da primeira colônia pedestre da empresa. Uma colônia que acolheria e absorveria os cidadãos detidos por violação do código de circulação na via pública. Mas que também receberia aqueles que, por temperamento ou opção filosófica, preferiam continuar a ser peões num mundo de monociclistas (Ladeira, 2018a, p.74).

The figure of the inspector is central at the school and on the streets, ensuring the compliance with rules and acceptance of the social organisation. In “O professor”, the inspector swings his body in all directions as he speaks, like a lighthouse, pointing at and looking everywhere. His figure is priest-like and awe-inspiring (Ladeira, 2018a, p.17). Worthy of mention is the fact that there are figures that replace the position of the inspector with similar overseeing functions, such as officers at the airport (“Agência”), the reading board (“O objecto”), the coordinator (“O Complexo”) and the nurse (“Falésia”). The closer human overseeing gets to machine-like overseeing, the more effective it is: “Aliviava assim um sistema que - apesar de razoavelmente eficaz - se encontrava sempre sobrecarregado” (Ladeira, 2018a, p.34).

Ladeira’s anthologies also feature key places of present-day high-tech and urban society: the airport (“Agência”); crowded streets (“O inspector”, “Seis drones” and “A Rede”); and optical highways enablers of phone calls and social networking (“Estás livre no sábado?” and “Galeria”). These new places are Augé’s “non-places”; they convey the contemporaneous relations with space, time and interaction among individuals (Augé, 1995). They result from speed and space virtualisation, that is, the impositions of supermodernity.⁶ Individuals need to accomplish more in little time. Augé contended that solitude was the consequence of supermodern times, that is “solitude [wa]s experienced as an overburdening or emptying of individuality” (Augé, 1995, p.87). This is shown in “Seis drones”, when the protagonist’s personal drones stop working, leaving him defenceless on the street, vulnerable to the

aggressiveness of buzz marketing and nobody around him cares: “O egoísmo dos transeuntes não o surpreendeu. Confirmou-lhe, aliás, o que sabia há muito ser regra na cidade: «cada um por si».” (Ladeira, 2018b, p.12). In “Galeria”, Bartol, the protagonist, is manipulated by the social network’s management, with the complicity of his wife and best friend in order to make his personal life of public domain and pay for the security of his personal data. Action in these places conveys the extent to which personal and family relations become secondary whenever there is the need to preserve the AI-based social systems. In “Falésia”, these are relations that Lars, the nurse, describes as a professional impasse, one of the three impasses (together with social and road and pedestrian) that determined the beginning of virtual life in 2025, lived massively by all inhabitants artificially kept in vegetative state and neurologically linked to virtual life (Ladeira, 2018b, p.125-126). This is Baudrillard’s hyperreality, the reality composed of simulacra, pushed to its limit. The French philosopher contended that in technologically advanced societies, consciousness is unable to distinguish reality from fiction (Baudrillard, 1994). Twenty-five years later and in view of the appealing AI advancements, fears that reality becomes fiction itself increase and the short story “Falésia” is illustrative of these fears. As these advancements become more effective and, consequently, more luring, human interactions and their natural propensity to include unforeseen disagreements and opinion divergences are considered socially destabilising because they cannot be avoided. They eventually jeopardise social stability and disrupt smoothly effective monitoring; thus, they need public disciplining that can eventually take the shape of death (“Falésia”) and exile (“Os monociclistas”). Han contends that the violence of transparency, to which I add the obedience to conform to it, lies in the “compulsion for transparency flattens out the human being itself, making it a functional element within the system” (Han, 2015, p.2-3). He calls it “a particular kind of spiritual burnout” (Han, 2015, p.3). In “Galeria”, when compelled to make his life totally public on the network, Bartol is the evidence of this burnout as if life that is his wills and wants had been exhaled from his body:

À saída da sala 22, Teresa e Oleg aguardavam-no. Sem perderem tempo, abraçaram-no pela cintura e

6 Supermodernity is the term Marc Augé uses to characterize our times. It entails the difficulty of thinking about time due to the “over-abundance of events in the contemporary world that makes it difficult to understand the present and “give meaning to the recent past”; and the excess of space results from the fact that “the world is becoming open us” in an “era characterized by changes of scale” and that includes space exploration and rapid means

of transport that shortened the time of travelling dramatically (Augé, 1995, p. 30-31). Non-places are places characteristic of supermodernity. Castells calls the new communication technologies that entail transformed communication practices the space of flows (of information) as opposed to the space of places as they show the evolution of urban forms under a new spatial logic (Castells, 2010, p.408-409).

levantaram-lhe os braços para que se apoiasse nos ombros de ambos. E foi assim, pé ante pé, arrastando as pernas flácidas do recém-interrogado, que avançaram pelo corredor em direcção à porta (Ladeira, 2018a, p.101).

Home, understood as the impenetrable fortress in the west and, hence, an exemplary *anthropological place* where memory is nurtured and human interaction preserved, is not wholly safe from the consequences of technological surveillance and deindividualized ways of living (Augé, 1995:p.78).⁷ In “O contrato”, the home is invaded by officials and the protagonist dragged from under the bed and killed for failing to die of natural causes by the stipulated date; In “Falésia”, the persistent stain on one of the windows of the protagonist’s home drives his wife into an inquiry process that determines their removal from the social system. Order is the opposite of chaos as progress is the opposite of primitivism. Intelligence deters chaos by ensuring protection as a home should. In “A caverna”, when the global digital war breaks out, and the AI systems are attacked, the environment becomes dramatically hostile and life-threatening, but it retains its dome-of-protection shape:

Decidiu então que apenas os espaços não urbanizados ofereceriam a segurança por se encontrarem suficientemente longe da grande abóboda digital (Ladeira, 2018b, p.103).

The primitive cave is the opposite of the dome of protection, and it emerges as the space of the place of memory, the alternative anthropological place, where relations are nurtured. Living in a cave, away from the AI systems, is a symbolic journey to the remote past, to recover emotions and memories forgotten or undervalued. In this short story, this journey is shown through the description of the inhabitants’ routine, that include being hunter-gatherers, cutting up their food and cooking it on a fire, in community:

Foi-lhe atribuída a caverna número quarenta e três. E ela agradecia, a quem tivesse tomado a decisão, não apenas a escolha do local, inspirador e idílico, mas também a selecção dos companheiros com os quais, nos últimos dois anos, construíra uma comunidade exemplar de cooperação, de entreajuda e – porque não dizê-lo? – de verdadeira amizade (Ladeira, 2018b, p.102).

3. Creativity for Subversion

Han contends that “emotions derive from deviations from the way-it-is and are “dynamic and performative” (Han, 2017, p.43). Emotions are potentially transgressive because they can trigger disruptive and one-off decisions. “O professor”

starts with “Tenho treze anos e quero ser escritor” (Ladeira, 2018a, p.11). This decision results from the satisfaction to be able to use language freely and careless writing for an undetermined reader despite a pilot programme of writing with pencils being compulsorily terminated because it misfit people’s needs in a fast society. The title “Estás livre no sábado?” is also the opening sentence of that short story, uttered out of excitement, that disturbs the second speaker because it subverts basic codes of a conversation on the phone: “Que maneira de começar um telefonema! Já não se cumprimenta?” (Ladeira, 2018a, p.23). It is also the sentence that finishes the narrative, in the course of a conversation that relocates it to its due place in a purpose-oriented conversation with a third speaker after disciplinary mechanisms having ended up excluding the first speaker.

As far as the narrative process is concerned, emotions and sudden decisions propel the catastrophe before catharsis. They introduce narrative creativity in the sense that the short stories are more than descriptions of effective AI systems; these systems are tested and challenged. The old teacher’s decision to teach their students to write without digital resources causes one of the students, the narrator, to decide to be a writer as in the old days, without digital apps (“O professor”); the collective decision to wear ‘inspector’ face masks disrupts the surveillance system because it makes it impossible for the inspector to differentiate the watcher from the watched (“O inspector”); the reluctance to share private decisions disrupts the social network because it introduces negativity in a network that promotes exposure as positive (“Galeria”); the decision to help a man in trouble on the street may be the beginning of a love affair (“Seis Drones”); the decision to form a network of conscientious objectors tests the limits of the vehicle-controlled network (“A Rede”); and the stubbornness of a woman to find out why a window stain cannot be wiped off makes her husband and her find out the truth about the world they live in (“Falésia”). The AI systems are underrated when in view of the constraints they impose on human imagination and free will, humanness resists, and this includes the determination of a boy to become a writer, the survival instinct of a woman against the ruthless AI-based order of things or the thrill of living in community, cast away from the AI environment. Ultimately, resisting to intelligent mechanisms of tight control can only be counterposed with tighter control, as shown in “A Rede”. In this short story,

⁷ English sayings such as “An Englishman’s home is his castle” and “there is no place like home”, the Italian saying “casa mia, casa mia, per piccina che tu sia, tu mi sembri una badia”, or the French saying “charbonnier est maître dans

sa maison” convey the importance of home as the last stronghold of individual privacy.

when conscientious objectors challenge the network, this system is replaced by a hardened 'ultra-network' in the end. Decisions and emotions are potentially transgressive; nevertheless, the memory of the past knowledge emerges as the potentially transgressive temptation.

Memory is significant to understand the extent to which intelligence jeopardises the very notion of humanness and the extent to which creativity, as a human ability, is its redeemer:

Memory constitutes a dynamic, living process; here, different levels of time intersect and influence each other. Memory is subject to constant rewriting and rearrangement. (...) Digital memory consists of indifferent – as it were, *undead* – points of presence (Han, 2017, p.66-67).

The notion of time underlies these anthologies: maturation time for imagination to surpass the apps; time for the memory to show its dynamic relations; and, ultimately, time for the boredom and monotony produced by the AI-controlled environment to let creativity grow as inspiration to overcome the coercive use of power in such environment. The memory of a remote past is symbolically personified in the figure of the old teacher in "O professor", the first story of the first anthology:

Era um homem feio e velho, que olhava para nós como se tivéssemos feito alguma coisa que merecesse castigo. O olhar do professor magoava (...) era quase sempre fixo. (...) A pele das mãos e dos braços tinha manchas castanhas e era muito fina, quase transparente, com veias grossas. Eu pensava que o professor estava quase a morrer, que morreria antes de terminar a aula (Ladeira 2018a, p.11)

It is the consciousness that knowledge vanishes as time elapses. The figure of the teacher emerges as the depiction of a generation that is on the verge of disappearance, alongside a way of thinking that does not conform to the digital age.

In addition, the book in print and the printed pages are as potentially transgressive as a teacher because the book in print is not controlled and does not include reader-tailored content in view of the needs of the digital age.⁸ The digital book, with pop-ups advertising products that meet the reader's needs and wants, appeases the mind and stimulates consumerism in a global world. The reader-consumer indulges the inner life by fixating on externals in a certain way in order to create alternative figures of his or her self, which negate his or her mundane existence. Reading that D Quixote is a man who decides to destroy all chivalric romances because they defend values that have

produced in him a melancholic depression; that *Moby Dick* is about Ahab's crusade to protect the whales; and that Kafka's *The Trial* tells the story of a man whose accusations pending on him are due to a computer error sorted out, in the end, is not just reading novels with manipulated plots that make them aberrations of the classics; they show the extent to which alterity, that is, extreme emotions and the evidence of the complexity of the human mind, has to be eliminated so that power can be operationalized more effectively:

The negativity of alterity and foreignness—in other words, the resistance of the Other—disturbs and delays the smooth communication of the Same (Han, 2015, p.2).

Manipulating communication and eliminating complexity, in order to persuade that the world is - and has always been - solely driven by simple, straightforward and down-to-earth intents and emotions convey the extent to which knowledge of the pre-digital era is potentially subversive. The book in print is the fruit of temptation in a world homogenised by the AI, as described in "O Objecto". In this short story, the book in print is the unspeakable word – the forbidden object – a rarity, preserved, out of sight and hidden:

Quanto à infracção da leitura, não tencionava cometê-la. (...) Deus o livre de semelhante capricho e insensatez! Apenas quer ter o privilégio de poder contemplar o objecto sempre que desejar (...) (Ladeira, 2018b, p.34).

Thinking outside the box and eluding the black mirrors that abstract and simplify what merely is complex by nature is using the potential of imagination and, thus, subverting the logic underlying the AI-controlled environment. Returning to Guanzhou Triennial, Kaayk felt frustrated following the removal of his work of art because contemporary art means to raise questions and start discussions about important subjects in actuality and those of our near future (Qin, 2018). In this sense, creativity is inconvenient. Intelligence is certainly one of the issues that should be the subject of discussions and make us think about our humanness - outside the box.

Acknowledgement:

This chapter had the support of CHAM (NOVA FCSH/UAC), through the strategic project sponsored by FCT (UID/HIS/04666/2019)

⁸ Ironically or not, the only image about the future in these short stories is forged. In "O Complexo", as a group of friends admire the *Opticons*, spectacles that show their lives within a year's time, Andrei, Victor's rival in love, is unseen as if he had died sometime during that year. We

learn that this image had been manipulated at Victor's request so that Sara becomes interested in him more easily. This shows the extent to which intelligence can be subdued to mischievous intentions.

Bibliographical References

- Augé, M. (1995 [1992]). *Non-Places: Introduction to an Anthropology of Supermodernity*. Trans. John Howe. London: Verso Books.
- Baudrillard, J. (1994). *Simulacra & Simulation. The Precession of Simulacra*. Trans. Sheila Faria Glaser. Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan.
- Castells, M. (2010). *The Rise of the Network Society*. Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell.
- Foucault, M. (1995 [1977]). *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*. Trans. Alan Sheridan. New York: Vintage Books.
- Han, B.C. (2015). *The Transparency Society*. Palo Alto: Stanford University Press.
- Han, B.C. (2017). *Psychopolitics: neoliberalism and new technologies of power*. London: Verso Books.
- Heidegger, M. (1977). *The Question Concerning Technology and Other Essays*. Trans. and Intr. William Lovitt. New York & London: Garland Publishing, Inc.
- Ladeira, A. (2018a). *Os Monociclistas e Outras Histórias do Ano 2045*. Lisbon: On y va.
- Ladeira, A. (2018b). *Seis Drones - Novas Histórias do Ano 2045*. Lisbon: On y va.
- Lucas, L. (2018, November 15). China's artificial intelligence ambitions hit hurdles. *Financial Times*. Retrieved from <https://www.ft.com/content/8620933a-e0c5-11e8-a6e5-792428919cee>.
- Qin, A. (2018, December 12). Their Art Raised Questions About Technology. Chinese Censors Had Their Own Answer. *The New York Times*. Retrieved from <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/12/14/arts/china-art-censorship.html>.
- Roffel, S. & Evans, I. (2018, July 9). The greatest advances in AI: the experts' view. *Elsevier*. Retrieved from <https://www.elsevier.com/connect/the-greatest-advances-in-ai-the-experts-view>.